

CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Volume 52 No. 2

January 22, 2020

suggested donation \$1

Justice for Alex Flores

ORGANIZE AGAINST RACIST KILLER COPS



LOS ANGELES, CA,—There is a deep hatred of the kkkops by the family and community of Alex Flores, who was murdered by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) on November 11th, 2019. The family, along with our small Progressive Labor Party (PLP) contingent and base have marched nearly every

day for 30 days, taking a short break for the funeral services. This murder is becoming a mass issue in the neighborhood where Alex lived, and we are pushing to introduce communist ideas as we participate in the fight-back. Together, we have taken to the streets, blocked intersections, and shut down the

front entrance of the fascist “Shootin” Newton police station, all while leading Party chants and distributing CHALLENGE and PLP leaflets. We have received mass support from the community and passersby. Whenever a cop car came close or a cop approached us, the family countered the cops with militant chants like, “Alex Flores/racism means...We got to fight back!” or “Killer Cops, Killer Cops!” “How do you spell racist/murderer? L-A-P-D!”

Anti-sexist leadership in action

The political leadership of these marches is largely led by the women of Alex’s family. Often, they bring their children, some as young as two years old. On several instances, our marches were kicked off by a four year old girl (Alex’s niece) who led us in chants like “la policia, cochina, racista y asesina” (the police, pigs, racists and killers) for over 30 minutes inspiring the whole crowd.

During the smaller marches, many of the husbands would stay home and take care of the children while the women led the demonstrations, highlighting the role of women and a certain level of anti-sexism within their family.

The women leaders and family in general have largely led with our chants and have slowly been coming around to our message regarding Black workers killed by the cops. In addition, we have been describing how racism is part and parcel to capitalism, and the family has taken up our chants

Continued on page 3

★ **EDITORIAL** *Workers have no side in the bosses volatile U.S-Iran conflict...p2*

★ **NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT** *sellout transit union rides with bosses...p4*

★ **COLLEGE** *worker-student fight for free college, class struggle is in session...p4*

★ **COMMUNIST FILM REVIEW** *Queen and slim dripping in identity politics...p5*

★ **LETTERS** *I turned prison into a lab for PLP’s ideas...p6*

★ **INDIA** *capitalist turmoil rears its fascist head...p8*

OUR FIGHT

- ★Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.
- ★The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today’s world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.
- ★Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world’s workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.
- ★While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.
- ★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society’s benefits and burdens.
- ★Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of “race.” Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.
- ★Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.
- ★Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.
- ★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion’s false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.
- ★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

CONTACT US

Email
desafio.challenge@gmail.com

Mail
Box 808 GPO, Brooklyn, NY 11202

Internet
www.plp.org
challengenewspaper.wordpress.com
Twitter: @PLPchallenge
Facebook: Challenge Desafio

WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP’s criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual’s writing of an article.

CHALLENGE/DESAFIO (ISSN 0009-1049) published bi-weekly by Challenge Periodicals. 1 issue \$1. One Year: \$20. Six months: \$15. Send address changes to CHALLENGE Periodicals, GPO Box 808 Brooklyn, NY 11202, January 22, 2020•Volume 52 No. 2

Editorial

Workers have no side in bosses’ volatile U.S.-Iran conflict

The assassination of the Iranian bosses’ top military and intelligence leader, Major General Qassim Suleimani, is a big setback for the U.S. finance capitalists and their already weakened position in the oil-rich Middle East. While what may happen next is unpredictable, it’s clear that the world is more unstable today than it was before the New Year. As inter-imperialist competition intensifies, a global conflict over Iran seems more likely than ever—and with it, a looming threat to millions of workers’ lives.

Workers need to draw our own “red line” against all wars for profit, and against all the rulers who wage them. We must organize on the job and in the street to resist the bosses’ fascist, nationalist campaigns—to fight for a new world based on workers’ needs. A united international working class can turn imperialist war for profit into a revolutionary war for communism!

Setting off the powder keg

On January 3, Suleimani was killed by a drone strike at Baghdad International Airport, authorized by U.S. President Donald Trump. Suleimani, responsible for workers’ deaths on both sides of the imperialist fault line, “[was] instrumental to the steady spreading of Iran’s clout in the Middle East, which the United States and Tehran’s regional foes Saudi Arabia and Israel have struggled to keep in check”(NYTimes, 1/3).

The assasination came after days of attacks and counterattacks between the U.S. and Iran. Tensions began building on December 27, when an Iranian rocket killed a U.S. military contractor near the Iraqi city of Kirkuk. Two days later, U.S. airstrikes targeted Iran-backed militia bases in both Iraq and Syria, killing dozens. In retaliation, pro-Iranian militias, plausibly directed by Suleimani, attacked the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad, the wartorn Iraqi capital. Then the U.S. drone killed Suleimani and at least four associates, including Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, a top Iraqi militia leader.

Five days after the assassination, Iran responded with more than a dozen missile strikes aimed at two U.S. military bases in Iraq. Though there were no reported casualties, it seems unlikely that the new wave of hostilities will end there. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s top capitalist boss, is calling for U.S. expulsion from the region. “At minimum, Iran will take a significant step toward enriching weapons-grade uranium... [but] perhaps the most provocative thing Iran could do is carry out a terrorist attack on the U.S. homeland or attempt to kill a senior U.S. official of Suleimani’s stature” (Foreign Affairs 1/3).

Meanwhile, Trump has threatened to counter Iranian retaliation with attacks on 52 sites in Iran, one for each of the U.S. hostages seized by Iran in 1979.

Trump defies both wings

Trump’s decision to murder Suleimani appears to be a high-risk tactic masquerading as political strategy. On its face, the move put Trump at odds with both wings of the U.S. ruling class: the Big Fascist imperialists, controlled by finance capital, and the Small Fascist, more domestically oriented bosses, spearheaded by the Koch family.

The Big Fascists know they’ll ultimately need a devastating ground war to protect their profits in the Middle East (and elsewhere) against rivals China and Russia, but aren’t nearly prepared for World War III at this time. The Council on Foreign Relations, the main wing’s leading think tank, took Trump to task for his “reckless” Iran policy:

Trump has been adamant about his lack of interest in starting a new war in the Middle East—and yet, here we are at the precipice....[E]ven if he shows uncharacteristic self-restraint in the coming weeks, the desire for revenge in Iran, and the political momentum that desire is already beginning to generate, may inevitably draw the United States and Iran into a major conflict (Foreign Affairs, 1/3).

To curtail this major conflict, the main wing is responding through the House of Representatives. As CHALLENGE goes to press, the House is expected to vote on a resolution to halt military actions against Iran unless approved by Congress. The Small Fascists are fine with quick-and-dirty air strikes, and over the last three years have consolidated an opportunistic alliance with Trump on most issues. But they view a globally deployed military—and any future investment

in millions of boots on the ground—as a waste of their money. The Charles Koch Institute reacted with audible alarm to the hit on Suleimani: “President Trump should heed the mistakes of his predecessors and avoid getting sucked into another unnecessary war in the Middle East. The escalatory spiral we are now in with Iran risks such an imprudent and costly conflict” (1/3).

Trump’s latest mess shows just how much the Big Fascists’ surprise defeat in the 2016 presidential elections has cost them. The Terrorist in Chief may have thought he was one-upping Barack Obama’s 2011 assassination of Osama bin Laden, the al-Qaeda leader. But the New York Times, the main wing’s most reliable mouthpiece, pointed out a critical distinction: “General Suleimani was a senior official of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and openly targeting him was a sharp escalation in the conflict between the United States and Iran, all but taunting Iran to strike back. And that by a president who had previously demonstrated strong aversion to American involvement in the Middle East, contempt for intelligence from the region and occasional reluctance to order the use of military forces” (1/3).

U.S. imperialists have the most to lose

On January 5, Iraqi lawmakers voted to expel U.S. troops from the country. If the U.S. is ousted from Iraq (a huge setback for U.S. imperialism), the world’s second-largest oil producer, Iran will likely gain even more influence there. The U.S. bosses may not leave Iraq willingly, but it looks like they must fight to stay.

Not even Trump’s closest allies are standing by an increasingly isolated United States. Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain, reportedly angered by the drone strike, is slated to meet with Germany and France in coming days. “Secretary of State Mike Pompeo complained that ... ‘the Europeans haven’t been as helpful as I wish they could be.’” (NYT, 1/5). Europe’s bosses are no doubt worried about the critical transit chokepoint at the Strait of Hormuz, a passage for 20 percent of the world’s oil trade. Iran has intermittently threatened to close the Strait even before the current crisis (NYT, 1/5).

China-Russia-Iran alliance fills void

The U.S.’ declining power, and the volatility that accompanies it, is emboldening China and Russia’s role in the Middle East. Since December, Iran, China, and Russia have been running joint naval drills in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Oman, adjacent to the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian admirals characterized the exercise as a demonstration of “lasting security through cooperation and unity ... [I]ts result will be to show that Iran cannot be isolated” (Reuters, 12/27).

As Asia Times (1/5) noted:

China “is the largest buyer of Iranian oil, China is Iran’s largest trading partner, and Iran is a key geographic node for the BRI [Belt and Road Initiative]....Should a US-Iran war break out and the Iranian government [be] overthrown, it would be devastating for China’s regional interests... With US hostility and ‘maximum pressure’ toward Beijing, Moscow and Tehran (all under US sanctions), Washington is driving all three to coalesce.”

Workers unite!

As geopolitical tensions in the Middle East heighten, U.S. workers must prepare to fight anti-Muslim racism and fascist campaigns against “terrorism” by the most deadly bosses in the world: the state terrorists of U.S. imperialism. As the superpowers scramble to protect their oil reserves, trade routes, and profits, what’s most at stake are the lives of the international working class. Whenever the bosses are in conflict, whether its proxy or direct war, the burden always falls on our class. There are no good sides in this conflict. However one thing is certain: From Iran to the U.S. it is imperative that workers unite against the imperialist war mongers who are ready to sacrifice our class in the name of maintaining their lethal empire.

It is the job of communists to be vigilant in fighting anti-Muslim racism and U.S. nationalism, as well as cynicism. Only a united working class can survive the coming crisis. Only a mass revolutionary communist party can smash the profit system and end inter-imperialist war for all time. Fight for communism! Join Progressive Labor Party!☺

Justice for Alex Flores

Fight vs police terror continues

Continued from front page



The leadership of women workers figured prominently in this struggle.
This is a key ingredient for combating capitalist sexism

like “When the working class is under attack, what do we do? Stand up, fight back!” and “Capitalism means, we got to fight back!”

It’s not just LAPD,
it’s capitalism

The largest demonstration happened on December 5th, the night before the funeral service, with more than 50 family and community members, accompanied by 10 to 15 cars. We shut the area down for nearly three hours. Their militant fight back, in the face of such vicious police terror, shows the power of the working class and our Party to shape the politics of a struggle.

When the group returned to the police station, a PLP comrade made a speech, connecting Alex’s murder to thousands more—particularly Black workers—murdered by the kkkops and the role of the police under a racist capitalist system that can’t provide decent jobs, schools or housing for workers.

From the police station, you can see the luxury housing, corporate offices and the towering U.S. Bank building, and our comrade pointed out how the cops are part of a viciously racist capitalist system that needs terror in order to keep the bankers and billionaires on top and the working class oppressed. Alex’s sister translated the speech and thanked us for our support. We also heard her explain to pedestrians asking about the rally that capitalism is the problem.

In addition, we have been struggling with the family to understand that the racist system that stole their beloved family member

is the same racist system that attacks their fellow Black class sisters and brothers every day as well.

Now, whenever we call out the names in chants like, “Shantel Davis/Sandra Bland/ Ezell Ford/Mike Brown means?” they reply loudly, “We got to fight back!”

Having said that, so far, nearly everyone that has come with the family to the march, with the exception of one Black worker, who was a friend of Alex, is Latin. That’s another key aspect of what we as PLP in Los Angeles have contributed, along with our base— our ability to integrate and build multi-racial unity in the fight back.

The long term fight for
communist revolution

The family has now decided to shift to weekly marches, so we have shifted gears to building for “Flores Fridays” and continue to organize in our schools, clinics, churches, libraries and other mass organizations to broaden this struggle. At the end of the month we will be having a screening of a documentary on racist police violence at one of our members’ workspaces that the family will attend and speak at. We will continue to widen our base, sharpen the political struggle and deepen ties with the family with the aim of building for May Day and growing our Party. The struggle continues!

LAPD, city bosses,
racist to the core

The family and community are not fooled by the reforms the LAPD has undertaken

over the last 25 years. In fact, this so-called sanctuary city, run by liberal Democrats, often boasts about the LAPD’S “transformation.” It is considered one of the most ethnically diverse police institutions in the U.S. closely mirroring the demographics of Los Angeles. Yet we know that these reforms can’t stop (and haven’t stopped) the inherent racist nature of the police state and the need of the capitalist class to control and terrorize Black and Latin working-class communities.

Indeed, in a recent LA Times Homicide Report, 33 workers were killed by these “ethnically diverse” kkkops during 2019, and despite this the vast majority of those murdered by killer cops were Black or Latin (LA Times, 12/2019). This was up from the 21 workers killed in the year 2015, in which the LAPD “killed more people than any other law enforcement agency in the United States” (www.scpr.org, 6/1/15).

Not one of these racist murderers has been charged, let alone prosecuted by the Black District Attorney, Jackie Lacey. In addition, we now know the cop who murdered Alex is a Latin kkkop named Steven Ruiz. As the chant goes, “White cop, Latin cop all the same, racist terror is the name of their game!”



Workers-student fightback; class struggle is in session

NEW YORK CITY More than 75 students and faculty supporters at the City University of New York (CUNY) shut down a meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT), which was set to vote on a \$320 a year hike in tuition and fees. Capitalist politicians and their appointed trustees serve the billionaire rulers, not working class students. Their “educational” system aims to train some of us to work for them and to brainwash all of us into thinking that capitalism works for everyone. It doesn’t, so we shut their meeting down. We chanted, “What do we want? Free CUNY! When do we want it? Now!” and “If we don’t get it, Shut it down!” It was good training for us, because in the future we will have to shut this whole capitalist system down.

We refused to listen to the frantic pleas of BoT President Bill Thompson to be quiet. We continued chanting and holding up signs calling for free tuition. After 20 minutes of pulling his few hairs out, Thompson ordered the room to be cleared and CUNY security cops demanded we leave. The bosses give the orders and the cops obey. We left — but very, very slowly, meanwhile chanting loudly, “When CUNY students are under attack, what do we do? Stand up, Fight back!” In the hallway outside the meeting room, we continued to chant, and then one of the cops grabbed a female protester and pushed her into a room, where they intended to arrest her. But students and faculty chanted, “Let her go!” and we refused to leave until the cops finally released our comrade, without



pressing charges. This was another good lesson. The cops serve the bosses, but united we can beat them back.

Many CUNY students, the majority of whom are Black and Latin, come from families with low incomes. A majority work more than 20 hours a

week in order to afford the costs of college. That’s why students are not only opposing a tuition increase but are demanding a “free CUNY”—no tuition, with free books and transportation. But even with a “free CUNY” working class students will still be cogs in a system where capitalist profits are the main priority. And eventually we will have to fight and die in more and more bosses’ wars so they can continue raking in profits all over the world.

It is interesting that the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ recent chart of the 20 occupations with the highest projected increase in employment over the next 10 years shows that three-quarters of those jobs do not require a college degree. The capitalists don’t need large numbers of college-educated workers, so public spending on public colleges has declined, while taxes on corporations and the wealthy have plummeted.

What working class students need is an education in fighting back against this racist, capitalist system. Today we learned that with planning and militancy, we can disrupt the plans of the enemy. But only temporarily, because the trustees did eventually—in private—vote to raise tuition and fees. What we really need is a communist revolution to get rid of the fat cats, their hired politicians, and their entire system. We need to build an egalitarian communist society that meets the needs of all workers, worldwide. We need to build a revolutionary party to take state power. Join Progressive Labor Party!✊

Sellout transit union rides with bosses; build worker-rider unity

NEW YORK – Transit Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 is set to aid the MTA’s racist fare-beating campaign targeting Black and Latin youth in a tentative contract agreement with the agency that started last month. Both “parties agree to meet and confer to work collaboratively,” in assisting the MTA’s fascist crackdown, according to the agreement’s memorandum.

What does this entail? The supposedly “broke” MTA is spending \$249 million on 500 new kkkops to terrorize the working class. That’s a quarter of a billion dollars that could go towards major service improvements. Instead, workers will deal with continually crumbling infrastructure, breakdowns, and delayed trains (On top of these sanctioned killers in blue).

But that’s capitalism for you! Forcing workers to choose between paying higher fares or rising food and housing costs.

Both transit workers and the ridership they serve need to recognize these attacks and come together to fight for a communist world. Only then, will all workers get the living standards they deserve.

Union lies

The contract agreement—following the previous one expiring in May—is a slap in the face of transit workers. Local 100 leaders are claiming multiple victories, such as “inflation beating wage increases,” no increases in healthcare contributions, and protection of overtime after eight hours per day. The reality, for starters, is that in New York City, these “increases” still won’t cover the average two-parent, two-child family household in the city, which needs a combined income of \$124,129 annually just to live comfortably (Patch, 3/22/18). And those living costs are guaranteed to go up.

Workers give more for healthcare, less overtime

In a press release about the agreement, the MTA bragged about how much it will save off of workers’ backs. The union is saying it defeated the MTA bosses’ demands for increased healthcare contributions. Yet, they buried the fact that our emergency room co-pay will rise to \$100 in an effort to “encourage greater use of primary and urgent care providers.”

The new contract would also alter our pre-



scription drug coverage, costing workers \$20 for brand name drugs and \$40 for non-prescribed medicine. This would force more use of generic drugs. Transit bosses cheered the “\$27 million in savings” these cuts will bring.

The agreement calls for a one-and-a-half day increase in “employee availability,” which is the number of days an employee is available and reporting for work. This includes as of yet unspecified “productivity increases”—all code words for exploiting our labor more efficiently. The MTA boasts this “commitment” will save them \$17 million. Highlighted right after this information is a discussion of “recognition of overtime equalization,” with plans to enforce existing contract agreements to reduce overtime availability.

Third party cleaners

With subway stations becoming filthier, the union didn’t bother fighting for the 66 cleaner spots the MTA eliminated two years ago.

This is racist to the core, as most of those workers are Black and Latin and already earn far less than other transit workers. Instead, the agreement calls for outsourcing a one time, deep cleaning of 180 stations to a third party contractor. They

wouldn’t even be cleaning half the stations in the entire system!

Attacks on bus operators

On a somewhat similar note, the agreement negotiates a joint labor management committee with the Department of Buses, which, among other things, calls for examining the use and deployment of autonomous vehicles.

Considering the MTA laid off over 300 bus operators in 2010, this is a covert effort by them to further undercut the position, leaving more workers jobless.

Sexism is also rampant within the union, as only now the contract proposal includes a committee to find stand aside jobs for pregnant workers—something that should’ve become a reality years ago! This just shows how little Local 100 head Tony Utano and his cronies care about women workers.

Bosses’ propaganda divides workers on contract

Already, the bosses’ media is painting this as a drain on taxpayers. The New York Post—a known enemy of MTA workers—is on the attack, claiming the contract’s pay increases will cost \$310 million more by 2022, despite the fact that our salaries have nothing to do with the MTA’s rising deficits. This is another way the ruling class pits other workers against those who work in transit—and another reason both groups need to fight back in tandem.

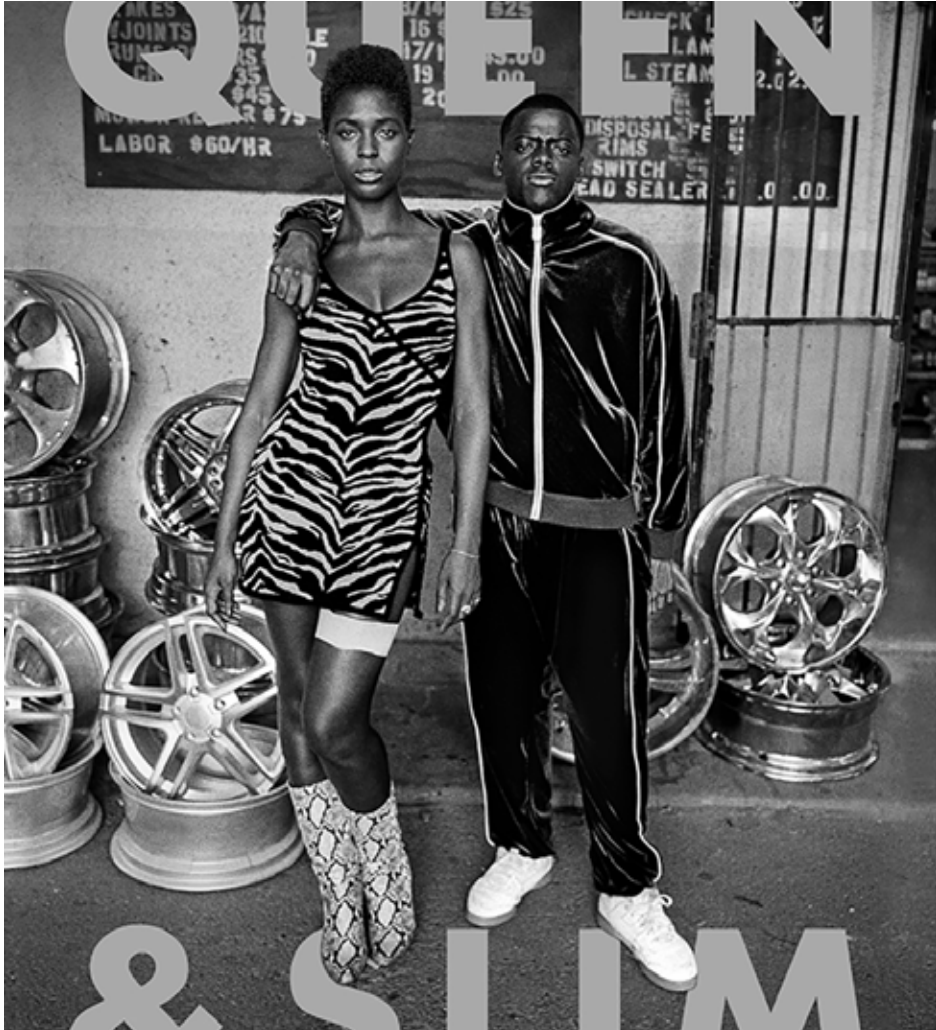
Workers need communism for better working conditions

With union misleaders pressuring workers to vote “yes!” and workers divided by MTA bosses, workers may come to vote “yes.” Racist Utano has no problems giving his mostly Black and Latin members givebacks disguised as progress, thinking they don’t understand otherwise.

This proves that only communism can quench workers’ thirst for a world without profit driven exploitation, and sexist, racist borders. Comrades may be spread thin to win this fight but it will take time and building relationships to organize workers to demand what we’re worth, and not accept the bosses’ crumbs. The fight continues.✊

Movie Review

Queen & Slim dripping in identity politics



Queen and Slim is decadent capitalist art masquerading as revolutionary

Queen & Slim, promoted as the “Blackest movie ever made,” falls short on making any real working-class advance against racism. We meet the protagonists, revealed to be Queen/Angela (Jodie Turner-Smith) and Slim/Earnest (Daniel Kaluuya) at the end of the movie, at a Black-owned diner for a Tinder date. That would’ve been the end of their relationship if it wasn’t for the drive home when they got pulled over by a racist white cop, accidentally killed him in self-defense, and embarked their journey to freedom.

No faith in the injustice system

The film showed promise. After the accidental shooting, Angela convinces Earnest that there are no good options. She holds credibility because she is an attorney. Thankfully, the audience was not given the option to debate the merits of the injustice system. Our leads were criminals in the eyes of the system, but to the audience, they were the characters we were to identify with and see the world through. But, it’s pretty much downhill from there.

Blackness is not revolutionary

We can’t separate art from its artists. To understand the film, we must look at its creators. Queen and Slim was written by Emmy winner Lena Waithe and directed by Melina Matsoukas, a creative brain trust of Beyoncé and others. Waithe says the film is a “meditation on blackness...but it was really like a hug I want to give black people” (NPR, 11/27/19). Born to parents who were in the Progressive Labor Party, Matsoukas was “raised to figure out how I was going to be an activist...I also wanted to showcase Black love and unity, not

just romantic love. Black unity is our greatest power against oppression. What is represented on-screen is not just the love between those two characters, but the love that the community shows Queen and Slim” (The Atlantic, 12/2019).

Where Waithe and Matsoukas go wrong is equating Blackness with radicalism. Speaking of a Black experience in and of itself—as if it’s not shaped by class, as if Black workers and Black bosses & politicians are on the same side of the oppression line—is not radical. Celebration of Blackness, without an analysis, is an insufficient reaction to a racist system that devalues Black workers. While Waithe and Matsoukas are clearly in conversation with the racism of life inside and outside of the entertainment industry (the film was not even considered for the Golden Globes), Black unity is far from the “greatest power against oppression.” While unity based on race may sound affirming, all skin folk ain’t kin folk.

Unity with whom? Against whom?

Unity based on race (race is fake, but the racism is far too real) is dangerous for the working class, Black workers included. Black unity confuses enemies for friends. As the menu of politicians, CEOs, union leaders, and masters of war diversifies, Black nationalism will have lethal consequences for Black and all workers.

Queen & Slim did address the issue of unity. Spoiler alert: The couple does not complete their quest to freedom because a Black worker sells them out. Matsoukas says, “We wanted it to be complicated...What the affects of racism do to our community...the Black man who sells them out, he’s a victim

of capitalism” Oprah Magazine, 11/28/19). The lack of class-consciousness is a serious problem in this period of low class struggle. However, this is a criticism of lack of unity within the working-class, but leaves out attacking Black bosses and politicians (Chicago mayor Lori Lightfoot, Baltimore mayor Bernard Young, senator Kamala Harris, etc).

Yet, there was one example of multiracial unity, however marred with a transactionalist instead of a principled stance. A white veteran, friend of Queen’s pimp uncle Earl, gives the couple refuge. He’s seen as repaying a favor, not as a man who acts out of solidarity with fugitive.

Black cops are not our friends

The film portrays Black cops in a positive light. When Queen & Slim jumpstart a car, they are allowed to escape by a Black cop who was dealing with his racist comments from his white patrol partner. This Black cop’s name is Langston. Never mind that the writer Langston Hughes grew to be a communist who depicted both the brutal anti-Black racism as well as multiracial and international fightback.

“I [Masoukas] have a Langston Hughes quote on my arm that says ‘I, too, am America’” (Oprah Magazine, 11/28/19).

This cop scene is troubling due to its implications of, to put it crudely, that more Black cops can make American worth being a part of. Why claim a country that was founded on the ownership and exploitation of your own?

A failed odyssey

Queen and Slim are brutally assassinated by a line of white police. Their odyssey remains unfinished, but their story becomes immortalized. The final destination of their quest for freedom was Cuba, where Assata Shakur also sought refuge after conviction of the murder of a state trooper (another allusion to Black power). She escaped from jail and got asylum in Cuba in 1984. Today, the workers in Cuba cannot escape from the profit system there or from the racism dividing tourist havens from the majority of workers.

Beautifully misleading

Queen and Slim’s brutal assassination leaves the audience with a sense of loss.

The film’s beauty and form do not make up for its misleading content. Ultimately, the film confuses enemies for friends and identity with revolution; it replaces multiracial unity with Black nationalism and a protracted class struggle with romanticism and martyrdom—in more ways than CHALLENGE has room to address. Readers, we welcome your thoughts!

The working class—Black, Latin, indigenous, Asian, and white—deserves a film that goes beyond identity politics and inspires our class to dismantle race and racism. Only a multiracial, international communist party with Black workers’ leadership has the chance of dismantling it.

Still, *Queen & Slim* is a popular film rich with imagery and symbolism, an opportunity for communist analysis and discussion with friends, co-workers, and students. We invite you to send your evaluation to CHALLENGE!☺

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

LETTERS



★★★★★

Another Big Fascist vies for head of terrorist state

It's important that CHALLENGE exposes the crimes of the Big Fascist liberal wing servant of the ruling class. Deval Patrick is one of the latest rainbow Big Fascist contenders vying for the high-criminal post of president, the commander-in-chief of the murderous U.S. imperialist war machine. There are two reasons not to trust him: Despite being a Black man his racist policies have hurt millions of Black and Latin workers. The second is he got the stamp of approval from Barack Obama, who called him his favorite candidate.

Deval Patrick was the governor of the State of Massachusetts from 2007 to 2015. Before that, he served as the Assistant Attorney General (AAG) in the Clinton Administration from 1994 to 1997. During his tenure as AAG, the infamous subprime mortgage companies were ravaging poor communities of color with their predatory lending practices. One such company was Long Beach Mortgage.

This company was caught charging Black and Latin workers more for their loans than white workers. The amount they charged was "unrelated to the qualifications of the borrowers or the risk to the lender." Younger white men got the lowest rates, while older, single Black women fared the worst.

Patrick Deval let Long Beach and its owner, Roland Arnall, off the hook. They denied the allegations and agreed to pay some of the customers back. They also agreed to put \$1 million toward partnerships with community groups for consumer education. These were minor punishments for this huge and growing business that was destined to become and spawn some of the biggest players of this industry. An industry which many blame for the financial devastation which the U.S. working class is still reeling from—The Great Recession of 2008-2009. Boston Herald, 10/29/10) Roland Arnall became a billionaire (one of the richest people in the U.S.). He is also well known for heavily funding the campaigns of liberal politicians in California like Jerry Brown, Gary Davis, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Antonio Villaraigosa (LA's liberal mayor), all of whom have used their positions to attack workers. His company, Ameriquest, became the largest subprime lender in the U.S. It ran roughshod over struggling workers, especially Black and Latin ones, through fraud and bait-and-switch tactics. It basically stole their properties through foreclosures.

All the while, Deval Patrick sat on the board of Ameriquest's parent company ACC Capital Holdings. He was paid \$360,000 a year for his services. Deval kept helping Arnall even after his stint at ACC. First, he, along with many other politicians, gave Arnall political cover to become ambassador to the Netherlands. (publicintegrity.org) Second, he helped him get a buyer for ACC Capital Holdings and Ameriquest when both were struggling in the run up to the Great Recession. Deval sent Barack Obama, then Democratic senator of Illinois, a letter on behalf of Roland Arnall. Obama used this as cover to say that this predatory lender was giving opportunities to minorities to own a home!

When ACC and Ameriquest began to struggle after the AGs of 49 states and the District of Columbia sued them and their fraudulent business, Patrick stepped in again for Roland Arnall. He called another Big Fascist from the Bill Clinton era, Robert Rubin, who was then the vice chairman of Citigroup. First,

Citigroup put fresh capital into ACC, and then eventually bought it outright. So now, Barack Obama says Deval Patrick is the candidate we should vote for. (Daily Beast 11/15/19) But the truth is that both politicians are servants for the Biggest Fascists and the liberal wing of the U.S. ruling class. The Progressive Labor Party will continue to expose these ruthless enemies of our class.

★★★★★

I turned prison into a lab for PLP's ideas

I have been spending time in prison spreading my views and politics. During that time I have encountered many views and stances. I have also encountered obstacles and misleaders. I have met a liberal who "wanted to create a utopia full of everyone's utopias."

I immediately explained to him, "what if I'm okay with hate speech or my utopia is a place where I can hurt whomever I want whenever I want." I was poking holes in his argument.

He seemed stunned by this idea that his utopia could quickly turn into the torture pit of hell. I met a Republican who wanted a government that allows privatization of all business. From that, I got he just wanted to be left alone with his money. I met a Democrat who said that communism is better implemented in a government with less corruption. He gets where I am coming from, but he was referring to reform while I was trying to talk about revolution.

They all did raise good points, and I didn't have answers for everything, but I am sure that the answers are in the working class. I am embracing the ideas of Progressive Labor Party.

★★★★★

DNA scams breed nationalism

In a recent article from the New York Times, it was revealed that top U.S. military leaders were advising against soldiers using popular mail-in DNA tests such as Ancestry and 23andMe. According to the military brass, soldiers' careers could be at risk if the tests came back showing some kind of genetic abnormality, such as sickle cell trait (NYT, 12/24/19).

Beyond just a soldier risking her or his career goals, these home DNA tests represent some very clear political traps that many workers unknowingly fall into. The first clear problem that the tests pose is a loss of privacy, with a person's genetic information held by private companies indefinitely without coherent oversight. One's genetic information stands to be sold to third parties or, even in some cases, used by cops (CNBC, 6/16/18).

Perhaps the biggest political problem with these tests and their results, is they can win workers to non-scientific understandings of genetics and race, as well as encouraging self-identification on the basis of nationalism.

In a 2018 commercial from Ancestry, there is a fictional scene apparently taking place centuries ago in West Africa, where a woman warrior is seen rallying others to battle. The commercial then jumps forward to the present day, with a Black woman beaming with pride, validated that her supposed genetic connection to this warrior is where she "gets her strength."

The fact is, these testing companies (which represent a multi-million dollar industry) use questionable databases and genetic markers that could actually be found in various parts of the world (Vox, 4/16/19). But they are marketed to workers to try and demon-

Reforms are temporary, revolution is necessary

Waging class struggle can have results! The strike of 130 Cinderbed transit workers in Virginia has forced WMATA, the Washington DC area transit authority, to come to an early agreement with its larger workforce of 8,000 bus drivers, mechanics, subway operators, and others. The four year agreement was a modest improvement, and certainly better than initially expected. It included a small raise, a small improvement in wage progression, no significant givebacks on pensions and healthcare, and also, an agreement to bring the Cinderbed workers into the main WMATA contract with local 689 in two years, when the privatization contract with Transdev Corporation expires.

But capitalist exploitation continues. Many transit workers and the working class riders still live from paycheck to paycheck. Management is continuing their assault on us as they continue their increased harassment and firing of workers through their draconian revised "discipline matrix." The billionaire bosses still control all aspects of society including all transit systems. They need transit workers only so they can exploit the riders at their jobs and continue making their super-profits. The whole damn capitalist system has to go. We need workers to join the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) and fight for an egalitarian communist world, where the international working class runs all aspects of society.

WMATA made these modest concessions because it was clearly terrified that the bold strike at Transdev and the mounting support of those workers by other transit workers in the region would mushroom into a broad illegal strike of the entire transit workforce. But the Cinderbed strike against Transdev has not yet been resolved, so the struggle continues, and we call on workers and other supporters to continue to join the picket lines in Lorton, Virginia.

As we fight the bosses for modest improvements in our lives, communists in PLP must build the revolutionary movement to destroy capitalism once and for all. This is a long-term battle, but as the Middle East is ever more volatile and moving toward more war, building a movement for revolutionary communism is more important than ever.

strate falsely clear distinctions along racial lines and geographical origin, and to make the racist claim that our genes are chiefly responsible for our thoughts and behavior, and not our social environment.

These companies are successfully profiting off of workers' alienation and our desire to be identified with something larger than ourselves. It's on us as communists and scientifically-grounded people to win more workers away from racial pseudo-science and nationalism and instead towards loyalty to the international working class and social revolution.

★★★★★

Queen and Slim disappointedly Black nationalist

Some members of our club saw "Queen and Slim" and while the film had the promise of telling an important story about a daring young Black couple and racist police, it ultimately disappoints—choosing to focus on the personal martyrdom of the couple rather than the social and political environment that they exist in.

Most disappointing are the peripheral characters. Nearly every sympathetic character is Black. With one exception, every character that helps the couple, including, preposterously, a cop, is Black. A police brutality demonstration is all Black. There is no multi-racial unity, there are no white workers who come to the aid of the couple. In short, nationalism is on full display.

★★★★★

Book Review

Hospital workers fight zika and bosses

Few novels are written by workers about workers. Timothy Sheard's Lenny Moss mystery series is a welcome change. In Sheard's latest novel *one foot in the grave*, working-class heroes fight the zika virus and expose the bosses' malice in the class struggle.

The series

The series is written by a retired emergency room nurse who bases his detective, Lenny Moss, on a real life janitor and union steward in a Philadelphia hospital. These books contain all the elements of a good mystery: suspense, developed characters, believable plots. Each mystery takes place within a larger medical framework. Lenny realizes early on in the series that when major crimes arise, he has to notify the police. He and Detective Williams learn to trust and respect each other's skills.

Lenny Moss is an older white worker. Although cynical, he goes to bat for all the workers, nurses, doctors and techs in the hospital even though they are not in his union. His union only covers janitors, housekeeping, laundry and cafeteria workers. He is well liked and respected by the other hospital workers. As a fighter, the administrators hate him. Solving crimes is a collective effort by a multiracial crew of workers. Though recognized as the leader, he knows he needs all of his friends to resolve the crime. His best friends in the hospital are Moose, who works in dietary, and his wife Birdie, who works in the sewing room in the basement of the hospital. Both are Black. Lenny's wife, Patience, is an X-ray tech at the hospital. She is Black and has two children from another marriage.



In *One Foot in the Grave*, the crime centers on Roy Reading, an EMT. He was thrown out of medical school for how he treated a comatose female patient. The person responsible for his being tossed out is Dr. Austin. When Roy finds out Dr. Austin works at Jefferson Hospital, he plots to poison her. Roy is very skillful. Detecting why Dr. Austin becomes so ill and who did it, falls on Lenny. Being cynical, Lenny suspects foul play.

Depicts the grind

This mystery novel contains both medical drama and funny anecdotes. The other unique quality of the series is that it depicts the crushing grind of capitalism. Sheard's mystery novels always have several threads set around medical issues. In this

novel, hospital workers are scrambling to contain the zika virus which has broken out in Philadelphia. There are so many zika patients, a triage tent is located outside the Emergency Room entrance. Nurses have to determine if an incoming emergency patient has been bitten by a mosquito. If they have bites, they have to be put in isolation rooms by themselves. Without more isolation rooms, workers and doctors use ingenuity. Doubling up zika patients in one room is a solution. Staff shortages and reduced supplies complicate the situation. Nurses battle privacy concerns. Nurses are forced to wear GPS tracking devices around their necks at all times on duty. Dispatchers monitor their every move and sound, even in the restroom! The novel illustrates the rising use of technology to monitor workers and quell fight-back.

Workers organize

Pregnant and women of childbearing age fear getting the Zika virus while attending patients because of the lack of proper safety precautions, such as face masks and gowns. Workers, even those in a union, who miss a day or two of work can be fired. Another thread illuminates the hard struggle to unionize nurses. Nurses could be fired for organizing on the job. The dispatching monitors play a prominent role in this thread. Nurses try to muffle their monitors and meet in the basement so dispatchers can't hear them.

Find out how it all works out in this thrilling pro-working class detective novel! The only thing missing is an organizing solution outside of the hamster wheel of reformism.

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from the capitalist press that may be of use for our readers
NYT= New York Times
GW= Guardian Weekly

UN "Peacekeepers" make war on Haiti's women

NYT, 12/24 — They came to bring peace; they departed 13 years later leaving behind disease and hundreds of children born to impoverished women and girls. The full damage done by...the United Nations peacekeeping forces in Haiti is still being reckoned....Stories that featured children fathered by U.N. personnel....[saw] the father long gone,...the mothers left to raise children alone in the poorest land of the Western Hemisphere....

Sexual abuse of the host population has been reported in...Mozambique, Bosnia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic....In Liberia U.N. personnel are reported to have fathered thousands of children between 1990 and 2009.

The Haiti mission...ranks as the most scandal-plagued of any. First dispatched to Haiti in 2004,...soon after a cholera epidemic broke out,...traced to poor sanitation in a base of...peacekeepers.

At least 10,000 Haitians died in the cholera outbreak, but it took six years for the United Nations to admit it has anything to do with the catastrophe....In...sexual abuse cases, one involved more than 100...peacekeepers who ran a sex ring that exploited nine Haitian children between 2004 and 2007....Few of the...soldiers or their national commanders have been held responsible for...the abuse of minors, and few of the abandoned mothers have recieved compensation from the United Nations or the individual armies involved.

Capitalism creates wage slaves, workers must use U.S. food banks to survive

NYT, 12/24 — ...Who goes to the food banks?....Not just the homeless and unemployed...[but] the janitors and support staff who help offices run smoothly and keep them clean. The Uber drivers and people who work the checkout counter and deliver groceries, the nannies and caregivers....43 percent of people who visit a food bank have at least one family member who is working full time but still doesn't earn enough to cover bills....In New York City, the poverty threshold for a family of four is \$32,402....[yet] that family more than qualifies for help from a food bank....

French bosses' mass layoffs provoke workers' suicide deaths

NYT 8/21 — The former chief executive of one of France's biggest companies and two subordinates were convicted...of "institutional moral harassment" in the suicides of 35 employees....

The three men were responsible for creating an atmosphere of fear during a desperate company restructuring that led directly to the suicides and attempted suicides of numerous employees....The executives tackled a \$50 billion debt by trying to get rid of 22,000 employees...The executives put in place "a conscious scheme to worsen the work conditions of the employees in order to speed up departures,"...and... "created a climate of anxiety" that led to the suicides.

...The executive...Mr. Lombard [said] the employees would have to leave "by the window or the door....Employees spoke of despairing colleagues who hanged themselves, set themselves on fire, or threw themselves out of windows, under trains and off bridges and highway overpasses as the company deliberately pushed them into roles for

which they were unsuited...to try to reduce the work force.

Brazil: racist cops murder workers at will

NYT, 12/21 — The masked gunmen pulled up at Wanda's Bar...and began firing the moment they left their vehicles. Two people, including Wanda herself, died on the patio.

Inside, the gunmen...[started] shooting unarmed patrons at the bar and in the main room, while a third followed behind with a gun in each hand, firing a single shot into the head of anyone still moving. When the massacre ended, 11 people lay dead, slumped over the bar and in the main room, draped over chairs or huddled on the floor....

Once again, masked gunmen had struck in the Brazilian city of Belem, as they have for nearly a decade, stalking the streets, robbing, extorting and killing without compunction.

They did not belong to one of the many gangs that traffic drugs or guns in Brazil.

They were cops....Part death squad, part criminal enterprise...who kill at will, often with total impunity....

The number of people...killed by the police reached a five-year high last year, rising to 6,220 — an average of 17 people each day....Police killings may exceed that this year, coaxed by President Jair Bolsonaro....But violence by the state is another important factor in the bloodshed....

To line their pockets,...militia members...bill businesses for security services, taking in hefty sums with mafia-style promises....

In Belem...the people killed by the police are disproportionately poor people of color, as they are elsewhere in Brazil. Nationwide...75 percent of the people shot and killed by the police are Black.

INDIA

CAPITALIST TURMOIL REARS ITS FASCIST HEAD



Workers put on militant protests against President Narendra Modi, but only through communist revolution can we wipe out the global plague of fascism.

From U.S. President Donald Trump’s impeachment to massive protests against austerity reforms in Chile and France, the international capitalist system is in crisis. Nowhere is this clearer than in India. Once paraded by the capitalist bosses as “the world’s largest democracy” and a shining example of economic growth, India continues to be plagued by racism, nationalism, and massive poverty and inequality.

Indian Prime Minster Narendra Modi has responded to workers’ frustrations over economic stagnation by scapegoating Muslim workers and forcing through a wave of anti-immigrant laws. Hundreds of thousands of workers are pushing back against these racist crackdowns, flooding the streets of major cities and battling with police and government forces.

While these countrywide protests showcase some of the boldness and solidarity that will be needed to defeat capitalism, their narrow reform content is a trap for workers. Settling for anything less than communist revolution will only strengthen the bosses. The Progressive Labor Party (PLP) stands with the working class of India as it fights against fascist anti-Muslim policies. But ultimately, only international communist revolution led by a mass PLP will smash Modi and the racist profit system that puts him and other capitalist stooges in power.

Modi Operandi: Fascism grows in India

Since winning re-election and a majority in the Indian parliament last May, Modi and his Hindu hyper-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have been emboldened to ramp up racist, anti-worker attacks across the country. In August 2019, in a brazen land grab, Modi’s government canceled the “autonomous” status of the Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir. It flooded the region with troops, shut down the internet, and jailed opposition leaders.

Next the BJP established a National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the eastern state of Assam, forcing workers to prove that they’d arrived in India before the mid-1970s. Since most workers lack the required documentation, over two million people, mostly Muslims, have been stripped of their citizenship. They now face placement in detention centers or deportation to neighboring Bangladesh (Time, 12/20/19).

To ramp up anti-immigrant racism and further divide the working class, Modi and the BJP fascists moved to extend the NRC to all of India. To protect their majority Hindu power base, they drafted a Citizenship Amendment Bill for fast-tracked citizenship—except for Muslim workers, who were excluded (The Guardian, 12/19/19). These fascist measures have prompted mass protests of millions of workers.

India’s rulers are trying desperately to use racism to distract workers from an economic slump that has seen annual growth drop from nearly nine percent to less than five percent in 2019 (Times of India, 1/5). For decades, the Indian bosses diverted billions of dollars of foreign investment into the hands of a few finance capitalists. As a result, for the 12 million workers entering the job market each year, job prospects are slim and highly competitive (LiveMint, 11/19/19). To deflect attention from the profit system’s failures, the bosses are forced to resort to more intensive racist scapegoating, hand in glove with intense nationalism.

Caught between rival imperialists

Despite its worsening economic and political crisis, the importance of India on the world stage should not be understated. India’s geopolitical importance, massive workforce, and wealth of natural resources ensure that the world’s top imperialist powers will keep competing for a dominant influence in the country.

For decades, the U.S. ruling class has viewed India as a critical counterbalance to the growth of rival imperialist China in the Asia-Pacific region (Foreign Affairs, October 2019). To avoid alienating their ally, Trump and the U.S. bosses have

turned a blind eye to the Modi government’s racist treatment of Muslim workers (Washington Post, 12/19/19).

Meanwhile, the Chinese imperialist bosses have maintained a strong if uneven relationship with the Indian ruling class. Chinese economic and political support for Pakistan, India’s top regional rival, certainly creates friction. Territorial disputes in Kashmir, partly governed by China, have strained the relationship, as have clashes near the Himalayan mountains. But striving to keep U.S. imperialism at bay, the Chinese bosses continue to engage the Indian rulers with negotiations and summits (The Diplomat, 1/4).

Not to be overlooked are the Russian capitalist bosses, who are projecting political power in the region through big defense contracts with the Indian government, including a \$5.4 billion deal for advanced missile systems (Business Standard, 9/4/19).

For now, the opportunistic Indian ruling class appears content to hedge its bets—at least until a global conflict breaks out, when they may be forced to choose a side.

Smash nationalism and fight for communism!

In response to the government’s racist bill and fascist crackdown, thousands of Hindu workers and students have stood side-by-side in solidarity with Muslim workers. Demonstrators have been killed and beaten, but the movement has not been deterred. Women have given strong and essential leadership to the protests.

While this working-class fightback is inspirational, it is being co-opted by liberal misleaders who are calling for the restoration of “secular democracy”—a meaningless term under the capitalist dictatorship of the bosses. In the southern state of Kerala, politicians like Pinarayi Vijayan are leading workers astray by exploiting the protests to gain support for himself and other opposition leaders (Aljazeera, 1/4).

Though it’s a promising glimpse of class struggle, the movement to repeal the Citizenship Amendment Bill won’t stop attacks on Muslim workers. It won’t stop capitalism from destroying our lives. With the capitalist system in crisis internationally, the bosses are using fascism to safeguard themselves with anti-Black racism and attacks on immigrants. From Europe’s anti-immigrant movements to the United States’ bipartisan assault on workers from Latin America, capitalism is showing its true colors. Only the struggle for communist revolution can liberate the working class by smashing the bosses and their nationalist borders once and for all. That struggle can’t wait. Join PLP and fight for communism!✊

SUBSCRIBE or RENEW!

All the communist politics, news, and struggle from around the world!
one-year subscription: \$20 individual \$45 for institution

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Make check or money order to:
Challenge Periodicals,
PO Box 808, Brooklyn, NY 11202

